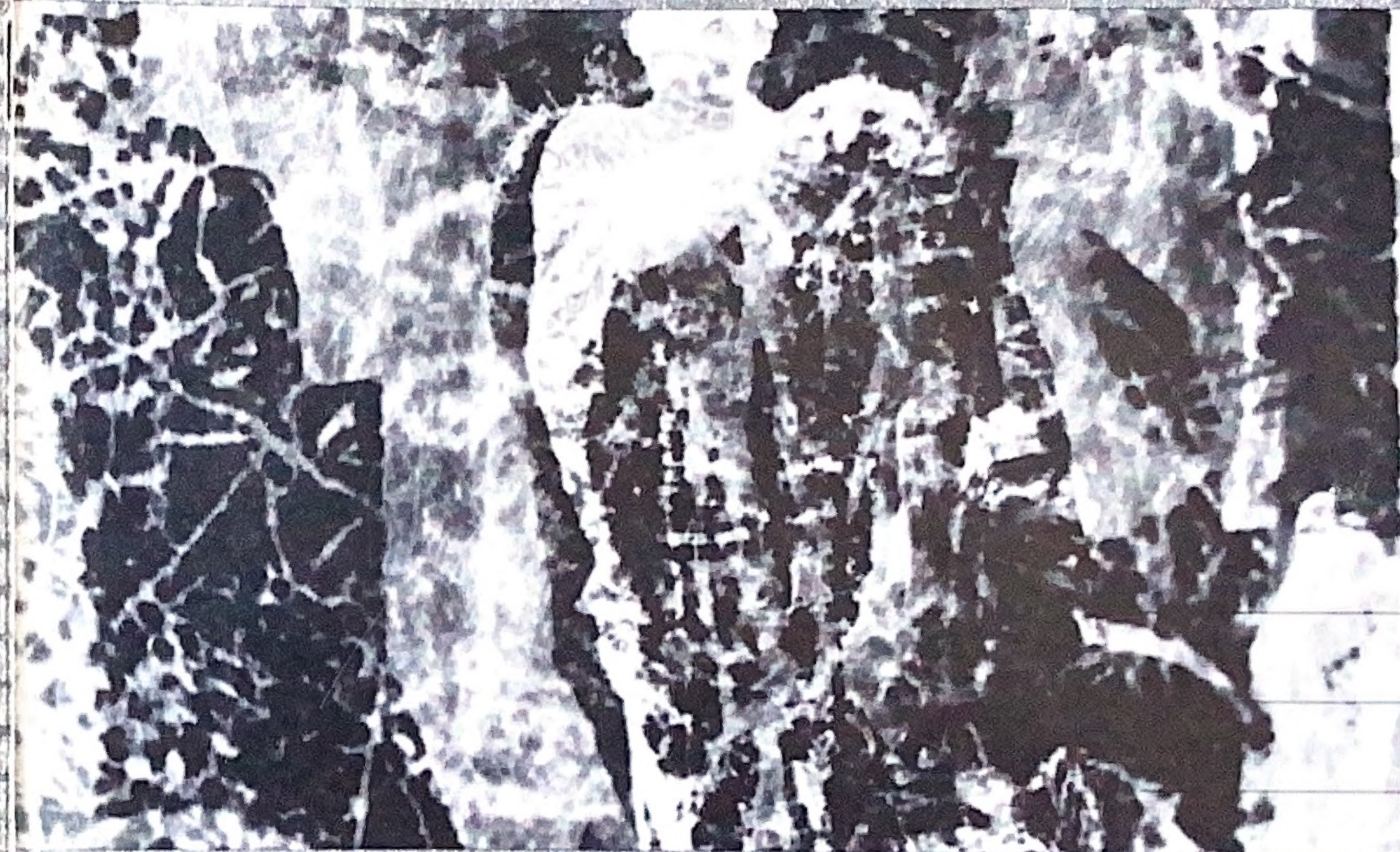


University Galleries

Illinois State University

Normal, IL 61761

(309) 438-5487



*Joseph
Nechvatal
Paintings
1986-1987*



Joseph Nechvatal

Paintings: 1986-1987

February 9 through March 20, 1988

University Galleries
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521

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Barry Blinderman, Director
University Galleries
February, 1988

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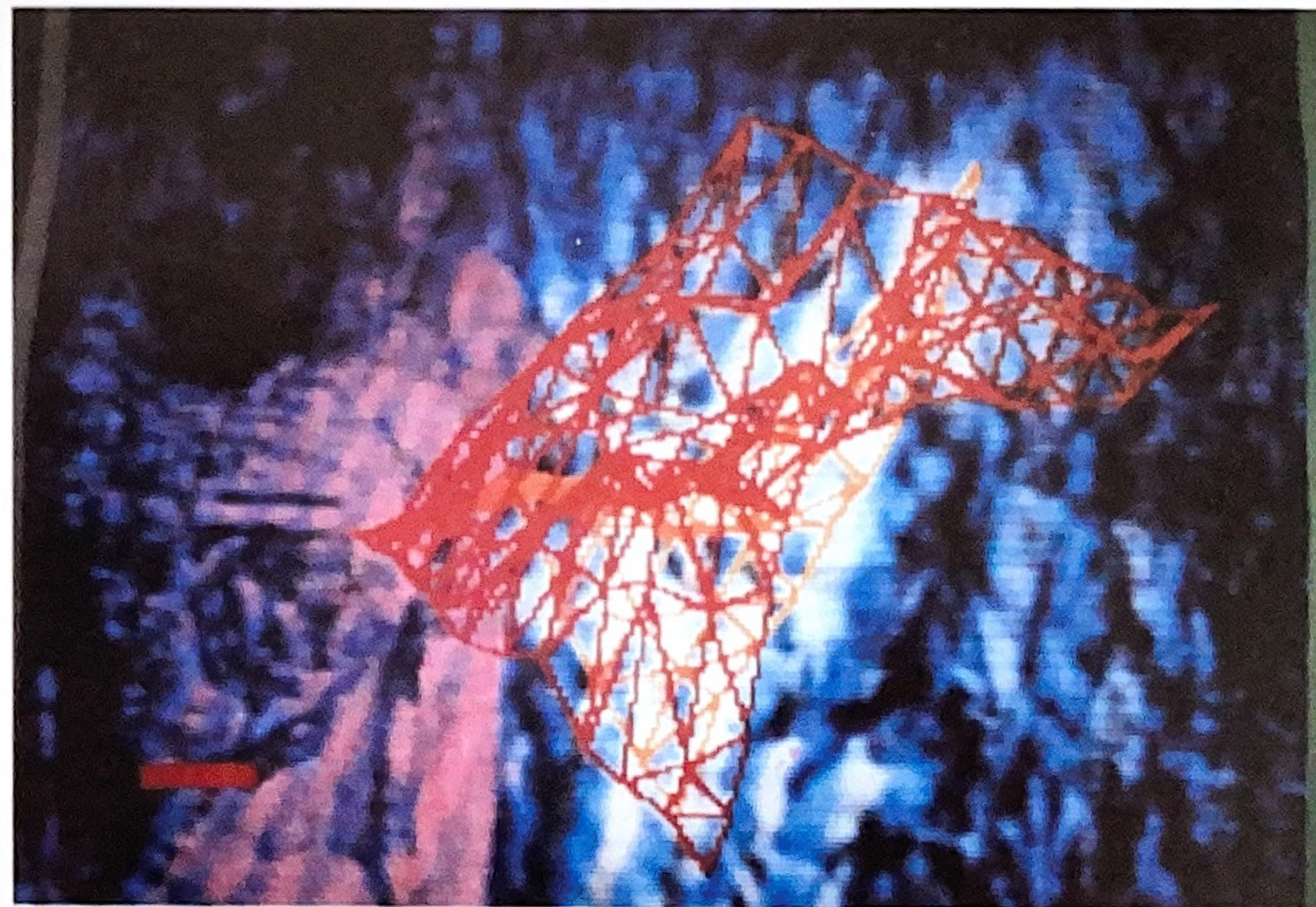
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Golden Joy Club, 1987



Rare Perfume, 1987



The Freer, 1987

Foreword

I remember as a child, sitting in front of a late 50's tube television, fascinated by no program in particular, but by the hypnotic flickering patterns of light emanating from the screen. When you turned those early sets off, the image became a smaller and smaller rectangle, finally reduced to a lingering dot in the center of the black screen. As that dot slowly faded into nothingness, I tried to perceive the exact moment of its disappearance, which was a futile exercise. I wondered what happened to the picture when everybody's TV was turned off. With no screen to alight upon, where did all those dancing electrons go?

Other memories from that techno-impressionistic period come into view . . . The Phantom Zone in *Superman* comic books, where Kryptonese convicts were dematerialized by a big ray gun into cosmic limbo, banished forever to incorporeality . . . Or the popular science fiction notion of early television broadcasts being picked up years later by a civilization light years away, just as

we see the light of some distant star long after the actual star may have exploded. Somewhere in the universe there might be a spot where decades of accumulated TV images commingle, however distorted, jangled and dissipated by collisions with asteroids and warped by the paths of comets. It occurs to me that these images would likely resemble the shimmering, spectral presences of Joseph Nechvatal's computer/robotic assisted paintings. Have I found at last where some of those dancing electrons landed?

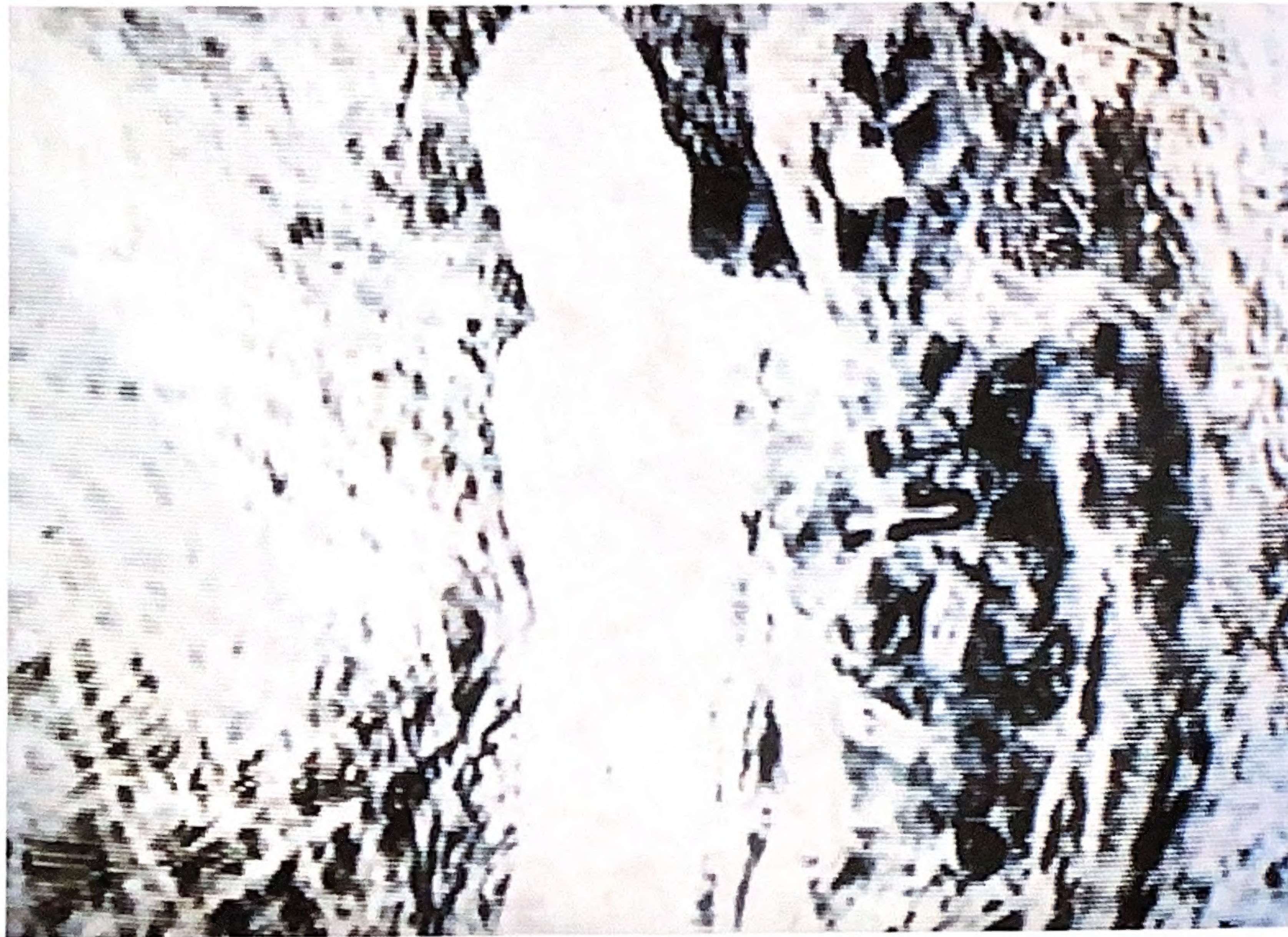
— B.R.B., February, 1988



Star Trek, 1966



Transconceptual Interconnected Causalities, 1986



Compassion Rules the Destruction of the Regime, 1986-87

The Ghost of Electricity

Is the next step in evolution to be the transformation of man into nothing more than electronic patterns?
by Barry Blinderman

— Alan Watts, *The Book*, 1966

Joseph Nechvatal's recent paintings are eerie dot-matrix apparitions of technology's manifest destiny — the dissolution of boundaries through science. Man creates in his own image: the telephone, television and computer are literal projections of our perceptual and cognitive mechanisms. In effect, the digital/electronics revolution has supplied us with a colossal external nervous system that has radically altered our concepts of space, simultaneity and individuality. With an unprecedented saturation of hallucinatory imagery, the specular regime of television, film and photography transforms society into a phantasmagoria, removing us from the reality of the world while pretending to capture it. Technology, the great equalizer, has achieved through mass-media overload the erasure of difference: images of real horror are neutralized by their coexistence with game shows and liquor advertisements. TV is the most direct form of mind-to-mind communication, delivering the masses wholesale to the corporate sponsors.

A certain amount of contempt for the material employed to express an idea is indispensable to the purest realization of this idea.

— Man Ray

Within the confines of a computer-efficient society, scathing visions poke through the glacier of sameness that has advanced upon us. Nechvatal's belief in technology's promised new channels of perception is tempered by his awareness of the accompanying threat of societal/nuclear disintegration. It is this paradox which lends his work its conceptual and political tension. His paintings are, in fact, executed by robotic arms spewing computer-commanded jets of red, yellow, blue and black pigment onto canvases up to twelve feet wide — using the same state of the art process which currently creates advertisement billboards.



Plunging Resistance, 1987

Nechvatal's involvement with media imagery and production tools dates back to 1980, when he began exhibiting intimately scaled graphite drawings comprising saturated, interwoven line tracings of pictures culled from newspapers and magazines. Irrational juxtapositions of images and scale were submerged into an all-over abstract network. He later produced photographically enlarged details of these drawings, onto which he sprayed bands or atmospheric areas of color. Photo-silkscreened images on canvas preceded his use of the computer to digitize, enlarge and "paint" his current work.



The forms of art are always preformed and meditated. The creative process is always an academic routine and sacred procedure. Everything is prescribed and proscribed. Only in this way is there no grasping or clinging to anything. Only a standard form can be imageless, only a stereotyped image can be formless, only a formularized art can be formulaless.

Just a Thought, 1983

— Ad Reinhardt, "Timeless in Asia"

Nechvatal's working philosophy is akin to Ad Reinhardt's embrace of Eastern concepts of vacuity, repetition and refinement — a quest to push substance to the verge of immateriality. As Reinhardt programmatically erased signs of individual gesture, working in series resembling production lines, Nechvatal distances his touch from the work long before it is digitized by computer and executed by robotic arms. He manipulates his original drawings or photographs through a complex process involving slide projection, re-photography, and video.

Nechvatal's work extends the dimensions of Reinhardt's existential Void through the metaphorical implications of electronic imagery. Ethereal impulses that are transmitted, received, and ultimately left to drift in the far reaches of space are likened to our transient corporeal presence in a continuum of being and nonbeing. Caught in a labyrinthine web of spectral resonance, images emerge and recede like impulses from the pool of the unconscious. The collective wreckage of history is washed ashore on laser-scanned waves. Altimira's urgent talismans move among the shadows of Plato's cave, transforming into new mythologies whose heroes are yet unchosen.

Today information moves fast, while meaning travels very slowly. The era of information makes less not more sense. But when the meaning of things is lost, when you no longer believe in structures and power, you find yourself in a spiritual state like in Zen, the satori experience, or in any mystical state where the world makes no sense whatever and where a more profound and universal meaning emerges.

— Joseph Nechvatal, 1987

We receive a superabundance of information via scan lines, whether on TV, computer screens or color reproductions in magazines and billboards. It is fitting that Nechvatal should employ a technique calling attention to information processed line by line to magnify his subversive images to the scale of media. Realizing the degree to which electronic media has infiltrated our dreams and unconscious, he uses the robotic arm as an extension of his own hand, recycling media's detritus and projecting it in a new form before the viewer's eye and mind. The ebb and flow between visible and invisible, between presence and absence, in Nechvatal's paintings suggests the desire to momentarily retrieve and redeem these fleeting images stripped of signification. Yet there is really nothing to clutch and no one to clutch it.

*Whence the smoke arose
I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like metal leaves
Before the urban dawn unresisting.
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable.*

— T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*, 1943



The Information Cult's Panopticonic Subject as Decentered Data, 1986

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Transconceptual Interconnected Causalities, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
64 x 90 inches
collection of Fred Alger Management, New York

The Information Cult's Panopticonic Subject as Decentered Data, 1986
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
97½ x 139 inches
private collection, New York

Compassion Rules the Destruction of the Regime, 1986-87
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
91 x 121 inches
courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York

The Freer, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
86 x 125 inches
courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York

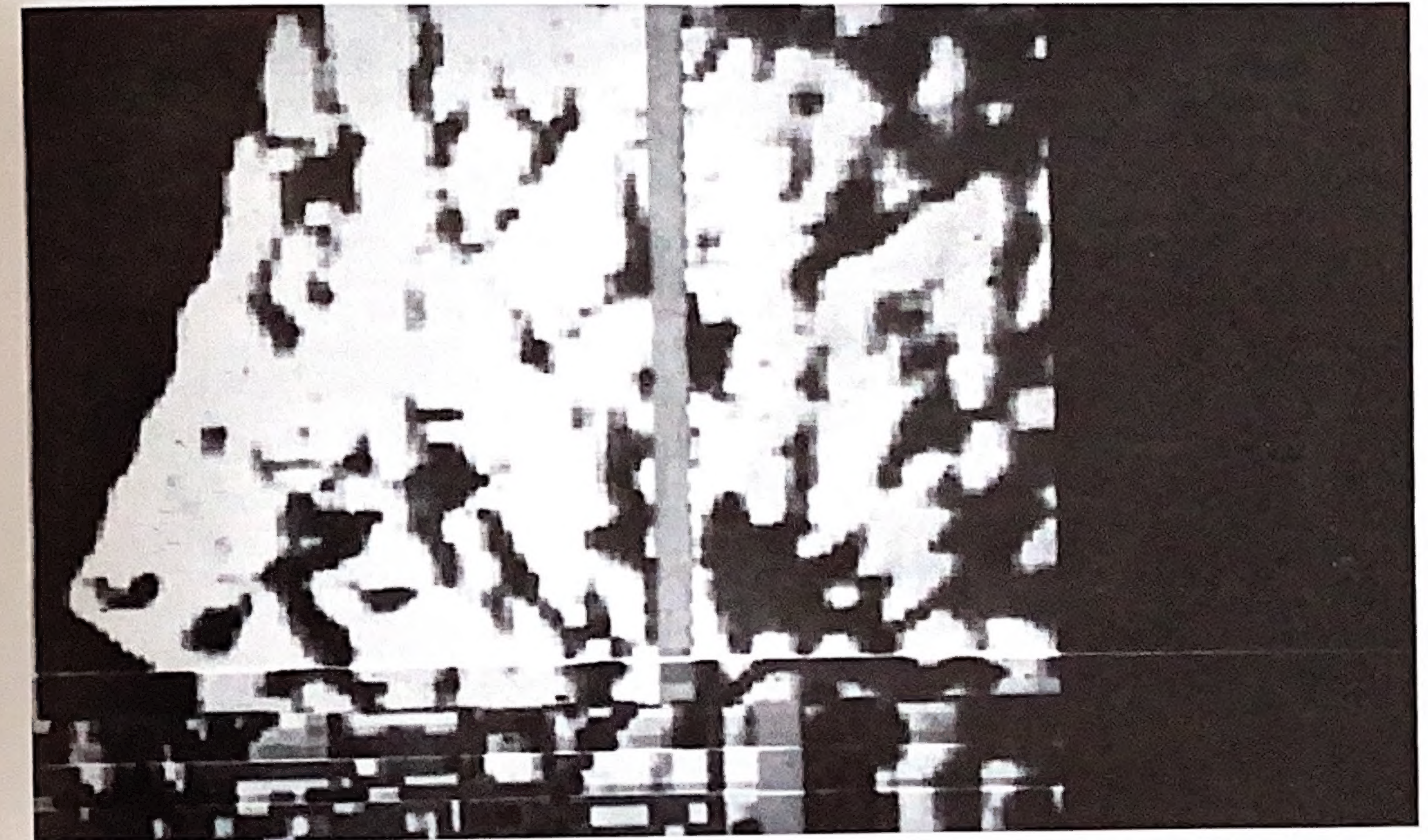
Rare Perfume, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
90 x 132 inches
Speyer Family collection, New York

Power Trance Endor, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
48 x 74 inches
collection of Noel Vietor, New York

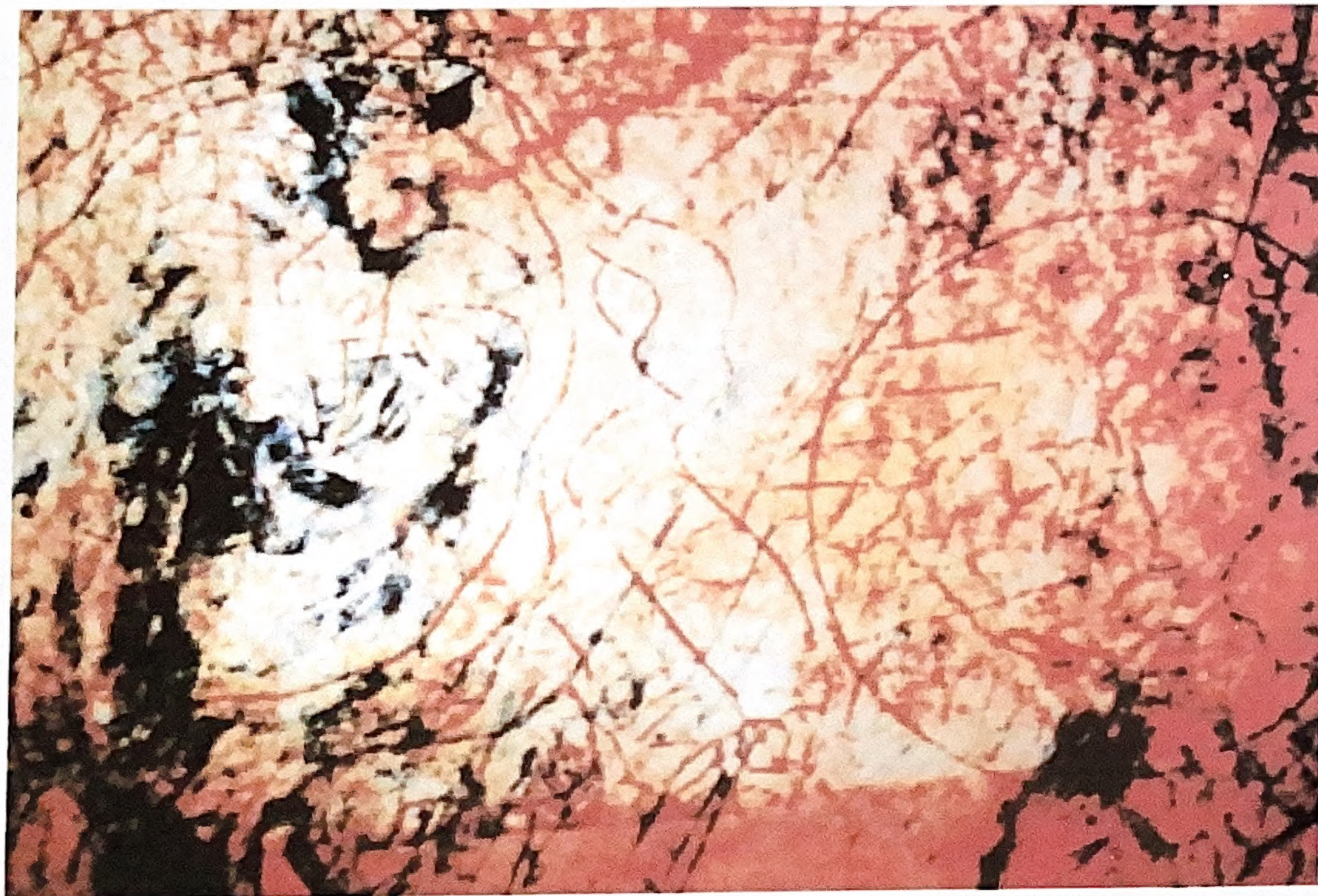
Plunging Resistance, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
96 x 74 inches overall
courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York

Peak, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
28 x 46 inches
courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York

Golden Joy Club, 1987
computer/robotic assisted acrylic on canvas
28 x 62½ inches
courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York



Peak, 1987



Power Trance Endor, 1987

Biography

(b. 1953, Chicago, Illinois, lives in New York City)

EDUCATION

1977-1978 Columbia University
 1974-1975 Cornell University
 1974 BFA, Southern Illinois University

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1988 University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL
 De Selby Gallery, Amsterdam
 1987 Galerie Antoine Candau, Paris
 Brooke Alexander, New York
 Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen
 Galleri Engstrom, Stockholm
 1986 Brooke Alexander, New York
Maybe Mental, Greathouse, New York
 Vanguard Gallery, Philadelphia
 Anna Friebe Gallery, Cologne
 1985 Brooke Alexander, New York
 Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund
XS: An Installation, Gray Art Gallery, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
 1984 Brooke Alexander, New York
Photographs by Joseph Nechvatal, Nature Morte, New York
 1983 Spiritual America, New York
 1982 Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT
When Things Get Rough on Easy Street, The Kitchen, New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1988 *Committed to Print*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
 1987 *Chemical Field*, De Zaak, Groningen, The Netherlands
Digital Visions: Computers and Art, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
New Coordinates, Simard, Halm & Shee Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Eye of a Storm: 31 Artist-Photographers from the Lower East Side, Photo Gallery, Tokyo
Documenta 8, Kassel
New York Scene, Galerie Liesbeth Lips, Amsterdam
Glasnost, Neun Kustler Aus New York, Internationalgalerie Maria Bonk, Cologne
This Is Not a Photograph: Twenty Years of Large-Scale Photography, John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL
 1986-1987 *Drawings from the Collection of Dorothy and Herbert Vogel*, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, (traveling)
Il Cangiante, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan
 1985-1987 *Infotainment*, Texas Gallery, Houston; Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Vanguard Gallery, Philadelphia; Aspen Art Museum; De Selby Gallery, Amsterdam; Galerie Montenay-Delsol, Paris
 1986 *Art on Paper*, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Spiritual America, CEPA, Buffalo, NY
Pay Attention, Brandts Palchus Galleri, Copenhagen
Drawings, Piezo Electric, New York

- 1985-1986 *Time After Time*, Diane Brown Gallery, New York
Face It!, Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund
Drawings, Knight Gallery, Spirit Square Arts Center, Charlotte
Cultural Commentary, The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
New York Art Now: Correspondences, Laforet Museum, Tokyo
1985 *Anniottanta*, Castel Sismondo, Palazzina Mostre, Chiesa di Santa Maria ad Nives, Rimini
Whitney Biennial, Group Material, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Memento Mori, Moore College of Art Gallery, Philadelphia
DRAWING: Paintings and Sculpture, Brooke Alexander, New York
Prints and Drawings, Reynolds-Minor Gallery, Richmond, Virginia
Smart Art, New Work from New York, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
1984 *Disarming Images: Art for Nuclear Disarmament*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati
Artists' Weapons: A Response to the Arms Build Up, Ted Greenwald Gallery, Inc., New York
Via Satellite, Amerika-Haus, Cologne
Natural Genre, Fine Arts Gallery, School of Visual Arts, Florida State University
The New Capital, White Columns, New York
Drawings by Contemporary American Figurative Artists, Meyerhoff Gallery, Maryland Institute, Baltimore
Humanism: An Undercurrent, University of Southern Florida, Tampa
Romance and Catastrophe, Piezo Electric, New York

- 1983 *Contemporary Perspectives*, Center Gallery, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA
Motives, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
New York New: 26 Artisti, Nello Studio di Corrado Levi Corso San Gottardo, Milan
Dessins, Gillespie-Laage Salamon, Paris
Small Works, Semaphore Gallery, New York
New York I Dag, Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg. Traveled to Randers Kunstmuseum
Joseph Nechvatal and Richard Tobias, Brooke Alexander, New York
Contemporary Drawings, Barbara Krakow, Boston
Cara Perlman/Joseph Nechvatal, Semaphore Gallery, New York
Four New York Artists, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York
Rotating Group Show, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York
Speed Trials, White Columns, New York
Joseph Nechvatal/Not Vital/Robin Weglinski, Gallery Nature Morte, New York
The Ritz, a Collaborative Project, WPA, Washington, D.C.
1982 *Paper*, Semaphore Gallery, New York
The Atomic Salon, Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York
1981 *Artists on Nuclear War*, Nexus Gallery, Atlanta
The Occult Power of Technology: Part II, P.S. 1, Long Island City
The Occult Power of Technology I, The Drawing Center, New York
The Suitcase Show, Collaborative Projects, Seattle
The Colab Show, Antwerp, Belgium
The Absurdity Show, ABC No Rio, New York

- 1980 *Collaborative Projects*, Brooke Alexander, New York
Times Square Show, New York
Salsa N'Colors Painting Show, Solidaridad School, PS 160, New York
The Doctors and Dentists Show, 591 Broadway, New York

SELECTED INSTALLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

- 1987 *Not a Door, A Spectacle by Scott B. Billingsly and Joseph Nechvatal*, Hallwalls, Buffalo
1986 *XS: The Opera*, Brattle Performance Series, Boston Shakespeare Theatre, Boston
1985 *The End of the Night*, Los Angeles County Art Museum, Los Angeles
Night of Power, with Rhys Chatham, 8 BC, New York
1984 *XS, The Opera Opus by Rhys Chatham and Joseph Nechvatal*, Performances: Pyramid Club, Danceteria, 8 BC and Dannheiser Foundation, New York
1983 *Isle of Dread*, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 71 Broadway and 120 Broadway, New York
Future Vikings, 93 Prince Street, New York
1982 *Blame it on the Brain*, Zippers Night Club, New York
1981 *Contemporary Psychodelia*, (Slide Show), Inroads, New York and Desire Productions, Baltimore, Maryland
Free Speech on Broadway Performance, Performance of "Trouble Light 1980" with Carol Parkinson and Cid Collins, New York
1978 *European Art-Performance Tour*, Centre of Experimental Theatre, Antwerp, Belgium; Ecole D'Architecture, Tournai, Belgium; Theatre on

the Rijn, Arnhem, Performance of *Trouble Light, For Raymond and Political Talk*

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- 1988 McCormick, Carlo. "Joseph Nechvatal." *Artforum*, March
Morgan, Robert. "Joseph Nechvatal." *Arts*, March
1987 Hoog, Eckhard. "Im Dschungel der Bilder Joseph Nechvatal im Aachener Kunstverein," *Aachener Dolszeitung*, May 22.
Levi, Corrado. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Cover*, February.
Lottman, Joachim. "Documenta-Eindrücke vor der Eröffnung," *Wolkenkratzer Art Journal*, June/July/August.
Malsch, Friedemann. "Joseph Nechvatal Galerie Anna Friebe, Köln 8-31.10.1986," *Kunstforum*, January.
Stiffren-Peters, Annette. "Gewirr aus feinen Linien Documenta-Teilnehmer Nechvatal vorab in Aachen zu sehen," *Aachener Nachrichten*, May 22.
McCormick, Carlo. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Unsound Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 1.
1986 Collins, Tricia and Milazzo, Richard. "Joseph Nechvatal: Grace Under Pressure," *Differentia*, Fall.
———. "New York: Tropical Codes," *Kunstforum*, March.
Larson, Kay. "The Flash of Truth," *New York Magazine*, October 27.
Levin, Kim. "Joseph Nechvatal," *The Village Voice*, October 14.
———. "Artwalk," *The Village Voice*, October 21.
McCormick, Carlo. "Cross Breeding Art," *Paper*, September

- Raab, Gugen. "Humanisierung der Technik; Joseph Nechvatal bei Anna Friebe" *Der Kolner*, November.
- 1985 Collins, Tricia, and Milazzo, Richard. "The New Sleep: Stasis and the Image-Bound Environment," *Art Journal*, Fall.
- Crary, Jonathan. "Joseph Nechvatal at Brooke Alexander," *Art in America*, January.
- Pincus-Witten, Robert. "The New Irascibles," *Arts*, September.
- Raynor, Vivian. "Joseph Nechvatal—Judy Rifka," *The New York Times*, October 18.
- 1984 Brooks, Rosetta. "Interview-Rhys Chatham & Joseph Nechvatal," *ZG*(#12).
- Cotter, Holland. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Arts*, November.
- DeAk, Edit. "The Critic Sees through the Cabbage Patch," *Artforum*, April.
- Fisher, Jean. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Artforum*, January.
- Glueck, Grace. "Joseph Nechvatal," *The New York Times*, September 21.
- Jones, Ronald. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Arts*.
- Kleyn, Robert. "Protective Mimicry," *Vanguard*, March.
- . "The Shadow Reflected," *ZG*.
- Kuspit, Donald. "Joseph Nechvatal," *Artforum*, December.
- Levin, Kim. "Art: Body Politics," *The Village Voice*, May 9-15.
- Masheck, Joseph. *Smart Art: Point I/Visual Arts*. New York: Willis, Locker and Owens.
- Robinson, Walter and Carlo McCormick. "Slouching Toward Avenue D," *Art in America*, Summer.

- 1983 Fine, Kimberly. "Joseph Nechvatal," *East Village Eye*, October 15.
- Levin, Kim. "The Shock of the Old," *The Village Voice*, September 27.
- McCormick, Carlo. "Joseph Nechvatal," *New York Beat*, December.
- 1982 Lawson, Thomas. "Joseph Nechvatal (The Kitchen)," *Artforum*, April.
- Schoenfeld, Ann. "Paper," *Arts Magazine*, Oct.

SELECTED ARTICLES BY THE ARTIST

- 1987 "A Prophylactic Discourse on Simulated Art," *C Magazine*, Toronto, Fall; *Code*, Amsterdam, December.
- "Post-Simulation Decadence," *Arts*, Summer.
- "Simulation & Sublimation: The Law is for All," *Unsound Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 1.
- "Superfacts," *Effects*, #3; *Spectacle*, #4, 1986.
- "High Style," *Arts*, April.
- 1986 "Theoretical Drawing Statement," *White Walls* #13, Spring.
- "State of the Art/Art of the State," *Spectacle*, Fall.
- 1985 "Holding Out the Promise of Pure Regression," *New Observations* #28.
- 1983- "Epic Images and Contemporary History," *Real*
- 1984 *Life Magazine* #11/12, Winter.
- 1979 "Untitled," *White Walls* #3, Fall.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Beijer Collection, Stockholm
 Dannheisser Foundation, New York
 Israel Museum, Jerusalem
 Malmo Konsthall, Stockholm
 Moderna Museet, Stockholm
 Museum of Modern Art, New York

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